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# **The Philippine Communist Insurgency: Its Accelerating Growth and Implications for the United States**

**Special National Intelligence Estimate**

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**THE PHILIPPINE COMMUNIST  
INSURGENCY: ITS ACCELERATING  
GROWTH AND IMPLICATIONS FOR  
THE UNITED STATES**

Information available as of 3 July 1985 was used in the preparation of this Estimate, which was approved by the National Foreign Intelligence Board on 9 August, 1985.

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THIS ESTIMATE IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE NATIONAL FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS.

*The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the Estimate:*

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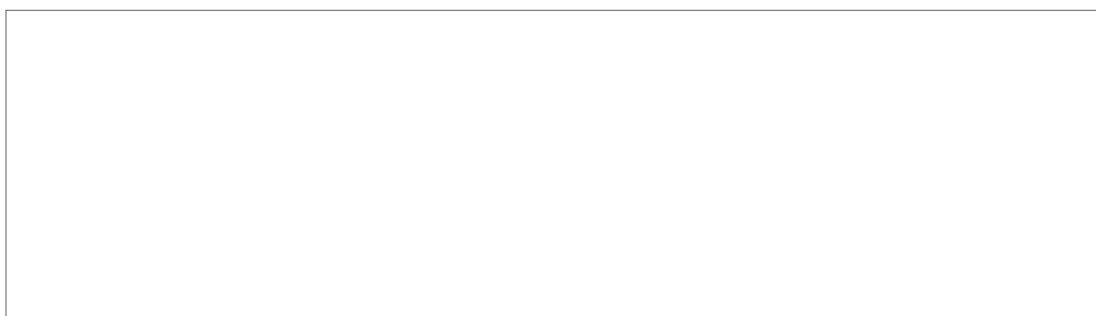
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## SCOPE NOTE

The increasingly rapid growth of the Communist insurgency in the Philippines and the absence thus far of any effective government effort to counter the threat raise the prospects that a Communist government could come to power in Manila. This Estimate examines the growth of the New People's Army (NPA) and the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), and assesses the near-term prospects (three to five years) for the insurgency and the government's counterinsurgency program. The implications for the United States of a Communist takeover also are examined.

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President Marcos, beset by an opposition effort to start impeachment proceedings and growing public allegations of vast financial investments overseas by the first family and its cronies, may advance the time of a presidential election from 1987 to November 1985 by resigning in September (45 to 60 days before the election). While such a move would provide Marcos with some political advantages—catching the opposition while still in a state of disarray and, assuming his reelection, giving him a new mandate for six more years—it also could exacerbate opposition dissatisfaction and provide the CPP/NPA with ammunition to expand their grassroots support base in the countryside—reinforcing the assessments in this Estimate.

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## KEY JUDGMENTS

The Communist-led insurgents in the Philippines are in an ideal position to benefit from the malaise prevalent throughout their country:

- Popular support for the Marcos government is at an alltime low.
- The prospects for meaningful political reforms under this regime are slight.
- Economic recovery will proceed only slowly.
- The military's response to the New People's Army (NPA) is for the most part inept and often counterproductive.

It is unlikely that the military's performance will improve enough to stem increased NPA activity in the near term.

The NPA is likely to continue to grow and will gradually increase the size and frequency of military actions to include assaults against better defended targets and expanded night operations.

We believe government forces may soon cede de facto control of some lowland areas and rural highlands to the Communists in many regions of the country.

The Communists continue to prepare to bring their revolution to the streets of Manila. Such an event would further undermine the Marcos government, though it would place the CPP/NPA apparatus in Manila at considerable risk. The Communists, however, cannot hope to achieve a military victory in the near future without substantially more arms and ammunition than they now possess. Nevertheless, we judge they will continue to rely primarily on internal sources for arms and funding.

In sum, we believe that, if present trends continue, within the next three to five years, the insurgents could stalemate the military in the countryside and bring widespread urban terrorism to the streets of Manila. We also believe, however, a major governmental crisis during this period could give a coalition dominated by the Communists, or the Communists themselves, an opportunity to seize power without first achieving a decisive battlefield advantage.

Our bleak prognosis, however, could be altered by a number of developments, chief among which would be the installation of an

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effective, reform-minded, non-Communist government in Manila.<sup>1</sup> This could come about as the result of an orderly constitutional succession in the event of Marcos's death, his forced removal from office by military coup, or his defeat in the 1987 presidential election. Any new non-Communist government would have an opportunity to remedy the country's many ills; with an improved economy and a calmer political environment, a reduction of the Communist appeal would be within reach. At the same time, any successor government would face most of the same formidable problems confronting Marcos—and without his experience or other assets. Whether a new government could make more headway against the insurgency or economic problems is an open question.

A less likely development that could alter our bleak prognosis would be for Marcos to recognize that reversing the current ominous trends requires him to initiate sweeping, fundamental reforms, including:

- Holding credible elections in 1986 and 1987.
- Depoliticizing the AFP.
- Implementing a coordinated counterinsurgency strategy and pursuing it vigorously.
- Adopting programs that would stimulate economic recovery.

We are agreed, however, that the chances are extremely low for Marcos undertaking any or all of these measures.

The current situation could give rise to some very serious problems for the United States. We could see a prolonged period of "civil war," with the government increasingly hard pressed, serious terrorist and insurgent attacks on US persons and installations, growing anti-Americanism, and a period of hard choices for the United States—including if and when to abandon Marcos. Even if the Communists ruled out direct attack on US citizens, increased violence would pose a substantial danger to the almost 100,000 Americans in the islands and US economic interests there. Under these circumstances, US efforts to prop up Marcos probably would be counterproductive in that the United States would be seen by most Filipinos as supporting an unpopular dictator. As long as Marcos remains in power, we see little prospect for success against the insurgents. At best, US aid might retard Communist expansion.

A takeover in the Philippines by Communists or by a government heavily influenced by the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) would be viewed by countries in the region—particularly other ASEAN

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countries and China—as a setback of historic proportions, perhaps even more devastating than our defeat in Vietnam. Besides the loss of US bases, it could also mean a significant loss of US credibility and prestige. Among other results likely to follow a CPP/NPA takeover are:

- US forward-basing strategy would suffer due to loss of the bases, and US power-projection capability would be adversely impacted.
- The Philippines might permit Soviets access to the military facilities—at a price—thereby increasing Soviet influence in the region and diminishing the United States'. This would pose a significant strategic threat to US friends and allies in the region.

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## DISCUSSION

## Background to the Present Crisis

1. The current insurgency can be traced to 1968 when several young Communists, led by an ardent Maoist, Jose Maria Sison, attempted to inculcate Mao's ideology into the moribund pro-Soviet Communist Party of the Philippines (PKP). Failing in this attempt, they split with the PKP and formed a new Communist Party, the pro-Beijing Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), with the aim of bringing armed revolution once more to the Philippines. They linked up with the remnants of a small Huk guerrilla band, which they renamed the New People's Army (NPA). [REDACTED]

2. Sison's guerrillas quickly sought to establish a permanently liberated base in the Cagayan Valley of northern Luzon, in imitation of Mao Zedong's experience at Yen-an. But they were no match for the Philippine armed forces, who mounted several campaigns in the early 1970s, forcing the CPP/NPA to abandon the fixed-base strategy. The Communists then opened guerrilla fronts in several remote parts of the countryside, emphasizing armed propaganda teams rather than military activity. Throughout most of the 1970s they remained an irritant in remote parts of the countryside while the military's attention focused on the Muslim insurgency in Mindanao and the Sulu archipelago islands. [REDACTED]

3. Communist expansion during the early 1970s was slow. They experienced numerous setbacks and learned by trial and error. By the 1980s, however, they were well entrenched on all major islands and were operating in nearly every province. Since the assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino in August 1983, CPP/NPA political and military action has escalated rapidly. Taking advantage of widespread popular disenchantment with the Marcos family and other internal problems, the Communists have fomented numerous antiregime rallies and strikes, recruited several thousand new guerrillas, and stepped up NPA military operations throughout the countryside. [REDACTED]

4. These insurgents are markedly different from the previous Communist insurgents, the Huks, who fought the government from 1946 to 1954, and again in the 1960s. CPP/NPA leadership today includes young

intellectuals from all parts of the Philippines, not just central Luzon; they rigorously pursue a Maoist strategy emphasizing political organizing of the rural population and protracted guerrilla warfare. By analyzing the revolutions in Vietnam and Nicaragua, they have learned the importance of manipulating international public opinion to their benefit. [REDACTED]

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## The CPP/NPA Organization

## The Party

5. The Communist Party of the Philippines—which we estimate [REDACTED] to be about 30,000 to 45,000 strong—is a tightly knit organization led by dedicated revolutionaries who are well trained and highly disciplined [REDACTED]. It controls villages inhabited by at least 5 million people and is contesting government control of villages inhabited by another 5.5 million. For the purpose of this paper, we use the term Communist-controlled village to mean areas where:

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- A Communist "shadow government" has been established.
- Communist peasant, women, and youth associations are functioning.
- Most of the population is sympathetic and gives material support to the insurgents.
- At least 50 percent of the population can be mobilized for protest actions.
- NPA militia units may be present. [REDACTED]

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6. As with all Communist parties, the CPP and its military arm, the NPA, is under control of a small dedicated Central Committee, that makes all important decisions regarding ideology, strategy, and management of the party. Central Committee directives are implemented by committees at the village level, the NPA at each level is under the command of both the local party committee and higher level NPA commands, and united front activities are directed by a similar interlocking command structure. This system of command and control has provided both strong central direction and local flexibility in implementing orders from above. [REDACTED]

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7. The CPP is organized along both territorial and functional lines and, since 1984, by rural and urban responsibilities as well [redacted] Six regional commissions, each headed by a Central Committee member, were created in the 1980s to cope with the geographic spread of the party and to ensure that all subordinate committees operate in accordance with the party line set by the Central Committee. Five functional commissions oversee party activities in the areas of foreign and domestic propaganda, military affairs, mass movements, and united front activities.

#### The United Front

8. The National Democratic Front (NDF), the party's main united front organization, is in the forefront of the CPP's overt effort to form a broad alliance of Filipinos opposed to the Marcos government. [redacted]

9. Its united front organizing skills have historically been the weak link in the CPP/NPA insurgency. The party's efforts to form a broad alliance of Filipinos opposed to the Marcos government have suffered setbacks repeatedly due to the capture of front members and the dogmatic policies of party leaders. Party leaders, realizing this weakness, are now concentrating on united front activities to ensure a role for the party in any successor government. The CPP/NPA has begun to scatter party cells, infiltrating the leadership of some organizations, forming new ones seemingly independent of the party when necessary, and establishing alliances throughout Philippine society in support of the party's revolutionary objectives. [redacted]

11. The party has also infiltrated organized labor through the NDF and considers this sector one of its best penetrated. Party influence in the Kilusang Mayo

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Uno—May First Movement—accounts for much of the increasingly militant tone of union activity. The labor movement in the Philippines is badly fragmented, and Communist control is tenuous among many of the leftist labor alliances. Despite this, party plans to continue fomenting labor unrest make strike activity likely to remain high in the months ahead.

### The New People's Army

12. The NPA, fighting along as many as 60 fronts nationwide, is characterized by strict discipline, operational security, and effective command and control.<sup>2</sup>

we estimate the NPA to have about 15,000 to 16,500 regulars organized in large units and as urban guerrilla units, and 15,000 to 20,000 part-time irregulars, organized as village militia and local guerrilla units

Individual guerrillas may participate in various organizations described below, depending on circumstances

13. **Regular Units—Regular Mobile Forces.** The Regular Mobile Forces are the best trained, equipped, and organized guerrillas. These full-time forces are responsible for most of the large-scale raids and ambushes. NPA regulars operate at three levels—district, guerrilla front, and regional—under the direction of their respective party committees.

14. Main Regional Guerrilla Units (MRGU) and Secondary Regional Guerrilla Units (SRGU) of between 50 and 300 men each are equivalent to a regular company of the Armed Forces of the Philippines. They normally confine their operations to the established guerrilla fronts throughout the country. The MRGU is a mobile force of about 100 to 300 guerrillas that can link up any time with an SRGU or local guerrilla unit, forming a combined force to conduct guerrilla operations. Within the past two years, the NPA has frequently combined such forces to successfully attack poorly defended government targets. MRGUs in Mindanao can now field 200 to 300 men, but units of this size are still in their formative stages in most regions. Operations involving 100 to 200 guerrillas throughout the rest of the country are not unusual.

15. **Regular Units—Armed City Partisans.** The NPA uses classic urban guerrilla tactics to bring the war to the cities. Four- to seven-member guerrilla

<sup>2</sup> Reporting varies. The Philippine Government publicly reports that there are no more than 45 fronts.

teams—called Sparrow Units—specialize in killing police, other government employees, and informers whom the party identifies in its propaganda as responsible for abusing the people.

the NPA has been organizing for combat in Manila since 1980 and now has about 300 to 600 people involved in these activities in the capital.

16. **Irregular Units—People's Guerrillas.** In municipalities and villages where the party is contesting control or is already firmly entrenched, local guerrilla squads of 10 to 20 irregulars are formed by the NPA, both to support regular insurgent military forces and to operate independently. These local guerrilla squads operate together with NPA regulars in or close to their home villages, sometimes in conjunction with much larger guerrilla units. They are usually poorly armed and may play only a supporting, rather than a combat, role in large NPA operations. By day, a guerrilla in

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such a unit works at his normal job; at night, or in emergencies, he is available for assignment by his party superiors. [REDACTED]

17. **Irregular Units—People's Militia.** A militia unit is the lowest echelon of party organization at the village level. These units of about 15 to 20 persons operate directly under the village committee rather than the NPA. The militia are villagers, male and female, who are covertly recruited and given the critical responsibility for defense of villagers in CPP-controlled areas against government reprisals and protection of resident or visiting cadre. A secret unit within each village militia is responsible for enforcement of party discipline, which includes assassinations. [REDACTED]

### Communist Strategy and Tactics

18. The CPP/NPA follows a political and guerrilla strategy of protracted revolutionary guerrilla warfare, following the teachings of Mao Zedong as modified by party founder Jose Maria Sison. The strategy emphasizes the importance of painstakingly building a base of support in the countryside among the peasant population. Guerrilla warfare is seen as complementing the political program in which party members and front groups work to undermine the Marcos government and legitimize their own organization. [REDACTED]

19. To broaden its popular appeal, the party increasingly is citing Nicaragua as an example of a revolution in which Marxist-Leninists, moderate opposition, and church workers successfully united to overthrow a dictator. The CPP/NPA portrays the Sandinista regime as one where the Christian plea for social justice has been realized without the repressive political and social controls of other Communist countries. This analogy has an appeal to some Filipino Catholics who oppose the Marcos regime but have misgivings about uniting with Communist revolutionaries. [REDACTED]

20. Another aspect of CPP/NPA strategy, though not well publicized, is the party's consolidation plan. According to Sison, once the Communists come to power, there will be a subsequent "socialist revolution" to consolidate Communism in Philippine society. Although united front tactics and coalition government proposals are articulated now, when the People's Democratic Republic of the Philippines has been established, the party alone will be responsible for transforming the society into a "proletarian dictatorship." At that time, the "blood debt to the people" owed by the landlord class and other "enemies of the people" will be avenged. [REDACTED]

21. It is in the political sphere that the Communists now see their most advantageous prospects. The CPP

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is maneuvering for a role in any government that would be formed should Marcos die in office and is actively promoting the concept of a coalition government in which it would legally participate. In a switch from its previous position of advocating a boycott of elections, the CPP/NPA now intends to actively participate in the 1986 nationwide local elections, supporting candidates they have co-opted, while disrupting the election process in areas where they are weak.

### Operation of a Guerrilla Front

22. The CPP/NPA concentrates most military action in rural areas. Guerrilla fronts, typically located in mountainous terrain adjacent to a populated lowland, consist of a series of zones or areas. A "red zone" contains the guerrilla base and surrounding base area. Guerrilla bases, although extensive in size, are not fortified military encampments. Rather, the NPA forces live in several established contiguous barrios—usually 10 or more—which differ little from other barrios. In some instances, these barrios are surrounded by a defensive perimeter of trenches and foxholes, but in most cases the NPA has abandoned these bases without serious losses as government forces prepared to assault them (see figure 5).

23. Beyond this core is a "pink zone," the area within the front where most political and military activities to contest the government's control are concentrated. Urbanized areas within this zone, controlled by the government and its forces, are usually classified as "white areas." The party is now stepping up efforts to penetrate these cities and towns, organizing white area committees and urban guerrilla units in most fronts. Areas that lie outside the guerrilla fronts are also labeled white areas, but, as the fronts expand, party strategists expect these white areas to disappear.

24. NPA Regular Mobile Forces are housed and trained in the guerrilla base area, which provides a reliable operational center, secure sanctuary, and rear area for the party's local political and military organizations. NPA regulars operate throughout the guerrilla front from these bases; large units attacking government forces and small armed propaganda teams increasing party influence in villages are scattered throughout the front.

### The CPP/NPA's Progress

25. Communist long-term efforts to politicize the rural population against the government are increas-

ingly paying dividends. New guerrilla fronts are being formed regularly, and the number of villages falling under Communist control has expanded rapidly since mid-1983. In southern Mindanao, for example, where the CPP/NPA is very active, current Constabulary estimates—which we believe very conservative—indicate the Communists have more than doubled the number of villages they control since the Aquino assassination in 1983.

one-third of the approximately 1,600 villages in the region—are now under Communist control, and they are contesting control of another third.

26. The level of insurgent activity has been increasing steadily over the last decade, with the most dramatic growth occurring since 1980. Last year, 75 percent of the more than 5,000 violent incidents were initiated by the NPA. Even discounting the 1,300 ballot box snatchings that occurred during elections in 1984, there were nine times more violent incidents in 1984 than 10 years earlier and 50 percent more than in 1983.

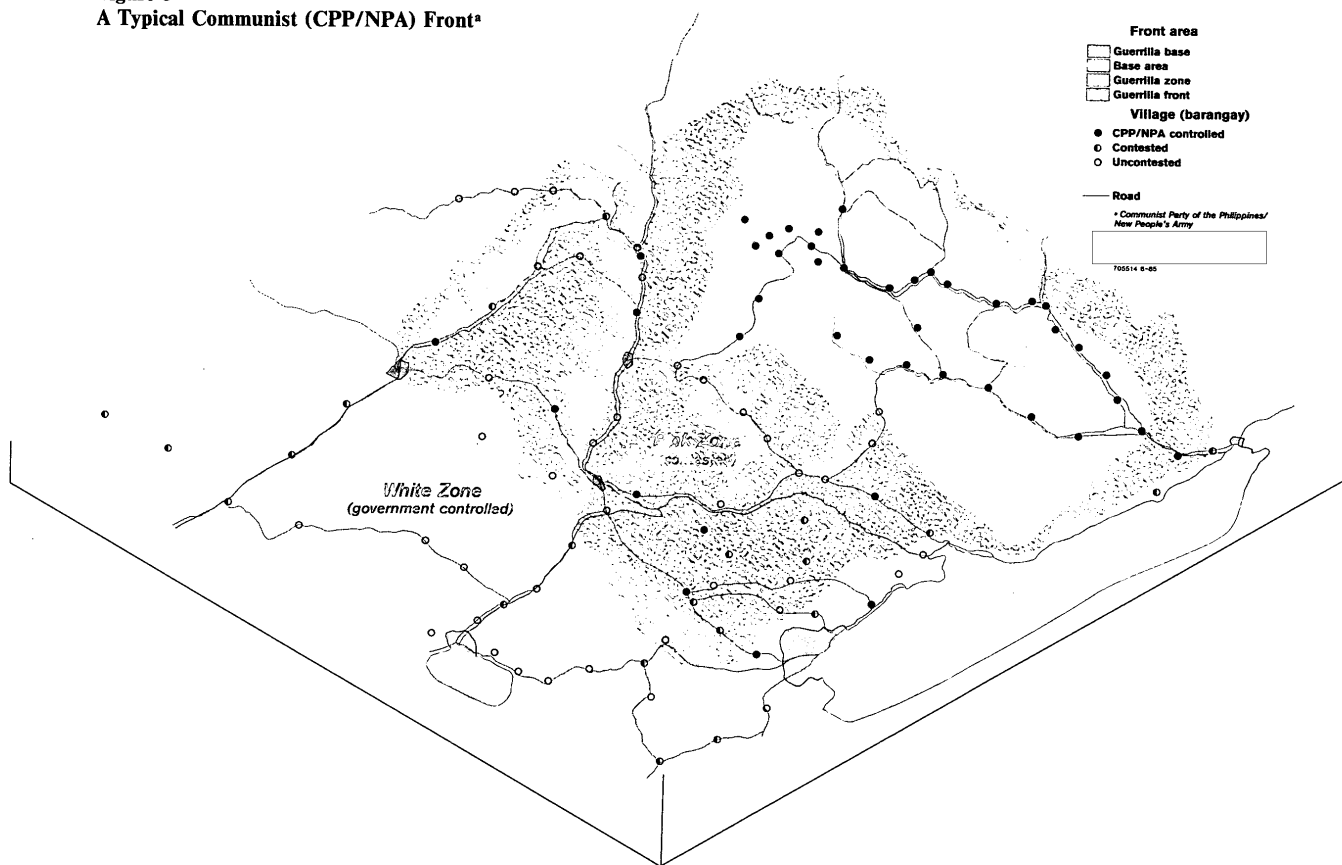
27. NPA units nationwide now routinely attack government forces. These include 100- to 300-man assaults on poorly defended armed forces garrisons and economic and strategic targets. Despite recent government sweep operations in Mindanao and northern Luzon, the NPA—not the armed forces—still initiates most of the military actions. Most CPP/NPA front commands schedule at least one attack on government forces per month; in Mindanao, they plan two per month. Raids, which net the guerrillas favorable publicity and firearms, increased by 53 percent in the past year—216 were carried out in 1984. By attacking weakly defended targets with large combined guerrilla forces, the NPA is assured a tactical and propaganda victory.

28. Most guerrilla-initiated incidents are focused on assassinations and assaults on individuals to acquire weapons. Such incidents are now common nearly everywhere. In 1984, government and civilian casualties as a result of these incidents totaled 2,600 killed and 1,400 wounded.

### External Support

29. We do not believe the Communists currently receive any sizable foreign financial assistance or arms supplies. Beginning in the 1960s, Beijing provided

**Figure 5**  
**A Typical Communist (CPP/NPA) Front\***



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arms, training, and money, but Chinese assistance was terminated in 1975. [redacted] members of the Central Committee have admitted [redacted] that the party's most significant foreign financial support has come from organizations of expatriate Filipinos in the United States. There is evidence that 150 AK-47 rifles, purchased on the gray arms market, were smuggled into Manila harbor in 1981. [redacted]

30. [redacted]

that the CPP leadership was reassessing the military struggle and had concluded that foreign arms purchases would be necessary if the Communists were to try to take advantage of the deteriorating domestic situation by rapidly escalating guerrilla warfare. Many CPP leaders, however, want to maintain an independent and self-reliant foreign policy. Therefore, we expect any attempt to purchase arms to be through a

middleman, such as using the Moro National Liberation Front as a go-between with Middle Eastern countries.<sup>3</sup> NDF cadre reportedly have been dispatched to Europe for this purpose. [redacted]

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<sup>3</sup> MNLF leader Nur Misuari, who is supported by Libya and Syria, has been advocating a tactical alliance between his guerrillas and the CPP/NPA for some time. [redacted]

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the CPP/NPA is reportedly now being tested in joint efforts in the labor sector between unions affiliated with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the CPP/NPA's labor front, the Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU). If true, this supports President Marcos's recent charge that the Soviet-controlled WFTU has been funneling money to both WFTU-affiliated labor unions in the Philippines and the KMU. Nevertheless, we judge that for the next year or two the Communists will continue to rely primarily on internal sources for arms and funding. [REDACTED]

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### Growing Popular Support for the Insurgency

32. The CPP/NPA's remarkable growth and the danger this poses to stability cannot be attributed solely to its own efforts or the appeal of Communist ideology. We believe that, in areas controlled by the party, some people cooperate voluntarily with the CPP because of its seemingly honest approach to correcting political and economic ills. The insurgent threat would be far less serious, however, if fundamental political and economic problems did not exist—a breakdown in the traditional political order, large-scale poverty and economic troubles, and the pervasive perception of [REDACTED] military maintaining the Marcos regime in power. [REDACTED]

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33. Political and economic power are monopolized at the top by a small oligarchy, while at the bottom the mass of Filipinos live in poverty without real input into the political process. The trappings and symbols of democracy exist, but they overlay a patron-client system inherited from Spanish rule and earlier tribal traditions. Until recently, the hierarchical network of patrons, held together by personal loyalties and operating much like a political machine, provided essential goods and services to the people in the countryside in return for their support. Because much of the country's wealth depended on agricultural production, power was distributed widely among regional barons rather than concentrated in the hands of a few leaders in Manila. [REDACTED]

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34. After World War II, economic modernization, the lure of the "good life" in Manila, land reform, and other such factors began to undermine the influence of the regional chieftains and concentrate power and wealth more in the capital. President Marcos dramatically accelerated this trend in the 1970s when he imposed martial law, which enabled him to concentrate greater power in his own hands at the expense of regional leaders. He now handpicks not only Cabinet officers, but also mayors and other local officials—a privilege traditionally reserved for the regional elite.

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[REDACTED] NDF contacts with the Soviets were first reported in 1982. A "reconciliation" between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and

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In many areas this has created officials more dependent on, and responsible to, President Marcos than to the needs of their local constituencies. [REDACTED]

35. Similarly, a few favored Marcos cronies have been given—often by presidential decree—control of large agricultural and industrial monopolies that dominate the economy and seriously disrupt the operation of a free market. These personal associates retain their favored position by demonstrations of loyalty to the President and financial support for his political machine—the KBL. Those who do not contribute time and money risk expropriation of their business empires and loss of political influence to others more willing to cooperate. We believe that a recovery of the troubled Philippine economy depends on the President's dismantling of the crony system, but, in view of his declining popular support, we are skeptical that he can accept the loss to his own power that this would entail.

36. Attempts to reduce the plight of the rural poor, such as President Marcos's agrarian reform program—which is limited to 14 percent of the country's farmland—have, in our view, increased poverty and worsened income distribution: at least 20 million rural Filipinos live in poverty—as defined by the World Bank as an annual income of less than \$160—and their numbers are increasing; the landless poor account for nearly 40 percent of households in rice- and sugar-growing areas; and several million Filipinos live in Manila's slums. The outlook for the next several years is not encouraging. Even if President Marcos initiated a sweeping economic reform program, we estimate that the majority of rural Filipinos will still be living in poverty in 1990. [REDACTED]

37. Overall, the Philippines faces a prolonged struggle resuming even modest economic growth under the burden of its \$25 billion foreign debt. The recovery will be especially sensitive to adverse developments in the international economy and domestic political turmoil. Even if all goes well at home and abroad, the debt crisis will continue to depress economic activity through 1990, and the political costs of austerity for the government will be substantial because of rising unemployment and higher taxes. At the same time, we anticipate a period of rapid growth in the working-age population—3.3 percent annually—projected to be the highest in Asia, which would ensure that the average Filipino experiences little improvement in living standards. [REDACTED]

38. Most Filipinos blame official corruption for much of their government's poor performance. They point to the enormous personal wealth of President

Marcos and his family, mostly accumulated while in power, and note that they have invested large sums outside the country. And although enriching one's self while in office has been a generally accepted practice in the Philippines, the extent of the President's intervention on behalf of family and friends has exceeded cultural norms. Stories of other officials both high and low participating in illegal logging activities, misusing public funds, operating protection rackets, and involving themselves in other corrupt practices have proliferated and been exploited by the Communists. Whether all these tales are true or not—and we believe many are—most Filipinos fully accept their validity and have little faith in government institutions. [REDACTED]

39. Abuses perpetrated by corrupt officers and undisciplined personnel and a general breakdown of peace and order have severely shaken respect for the military and the police. Many Filipinos question the government's ability to protect them from lawless elements and to dispense justice equitably. Murder, kidnappings, torture, and lesser abuses have become commonplace occurrences in recent years. Many almost certainly have been committed by overzealous officials in their pursuit of Communist insurgents, a pattern that began while suppressing the Muslim insurgency during the 1970s. [REDACTED]

40. In any event, we believe real and perceived abuses have been a major factor in many Filipinos' choosing to join the insurgent ranks. This is especially true of the growing number of Catholic clergy and nuns who support the Communists. Some already play important roles in the insurgent organization, such as Conrado Balweg, a rebel priest, NPA commander, and, now, popular Filipino folk hero. Priests and nuns among the CPP/NPA have recently stepped up their efforts to popularize the Nicaraguan experience, hoping to convince their colleagues disenchanted with the present government and its military abuses that cooperation with the insurgents will not adversely affect the Church's interests. [REDACTED]

41. Politicization of the AFP by President Marcos has also contributed to the deterioration of the military's reputation. Until a few years ago, most Filipinos viewed the AFP as a professional and competent force. The military took pride in a record of protecting the

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nation's security, defending the constitution, and not becoming involved in politics. After the imposition of martial law in 1972, however, President Marcos began blatantly to select officers for key assignments and promotions based more on personal loyalty than military competence. The morale of the officer corps plummeted, and the perception that politics rules the AFP has become the conventional wisdom for many Filipinos. [REDACTED]

### Weaknesses of the NPA

42. The CPP/NPA is not without its problems. The CPP/NPA's popular "Robin Hood" image has become somewhat tarnished in some areas. The population in Communist-controlled areas is discovering that the Communists have no magic solutions for economic realities and are much more thorough tax collectors than the Philippine Government. Another result has been popular resentment, as many learn that fear and intimidation play a more important role once the CPP/NPA assumes de facto control over an area and democratic ideals—such as consent of the governed—are swept aside. We anticipate that such disillusionment will grow as the Communists attempt to expand their mass base, making the CPP/NPA increasingly vulnerable to a sophisticated, coordinated counterinsurgency effort. Moreover, a dramatic increase in urban violence, particularly in Manila, could be the spark that ignites the middle class into action against the dangers posed by the Communists. [REDACTED]

43. Beyond this, the NPA lacks a reliable logistic pipeline to support a guerrilla war. Other CPP/NPA weaknesses include:

- *No foreign sanctuary.* The Philippines is geographically isolated. Neither Malaysia nor Indonesia, the nearest countries, will permit Communist insurgent bases on their soil.
- *Penchant for paperwork.* The Communists keep detailed records and files that are regularly discovered when cadres are captured at their homes or safehouses. When compromised, such information provides government security forces with a better understanding of the insurgent organization, membership, and plans.
- *No charismatic leader.* The CPP/NPA has no one of the stature of Mao Zedong, Ho Chi Minh, or Fidel Castro. The Central Committee and senior cadres in prison are virtually unknown to the public.
- *Anti-American rhetoric.* Party propaganda portrays the United States as an imperialist nation

and the sole prop supporting the Marcos government. To some Filipinos, this propaganda rings hollow.

- *Non-Communist elements in the NPA.* In the attempt to stress nationalism over Communism, the party appears to have accepted under its banner many individuals who have a grudge against the government but lack ideological commitment to Communism. In Kalinga Apayao, several hundred guerrillas belonging to an ethnic minority recently defected from the NPA but continue to war against the government.

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- *No combined-arms capability.* The NPA has demonstrated an ability to use small-unit guerrilla tactics effectively but to date has not used combined arms—the coordination of different types of military units—in its operations. Should the Communists decide to attack well-defended military installations, they will find it necessary to use direct and indirect fire from machineguns and mortars to support their assault forces. [REDACTED]

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### The Government Response

44. The government has been slow to accept the seriousness of the Communist threat and has still not implemented or even agreed on a comprehensive coordinated strategy for coping with the insurgency. Even if it did, the armed forces suffer from deficiencies in leadership, discipline, training, weapons, equipment, and logistic support and overall funding—so serious that its capability over the long term to stem the advance of Communist power is doubtful. [REDACTED]

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45. Recently many Cabinet officers and military leaders have begun to take the Communist threat seriously. Defense Minister Ponce Enrile, among others, recognizes the danger posed by the insurgents and advocates a coordinated governmentwide effort to deal with the threat. Enrile [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] now speaks openly of the alarming growth of the insurgency and complains bitterly about government inaction, which he attributes almost solely to President Marcos. Enrile earlier took the lead in attempts to activate a centralized high-level counterinsurgency program directed by the National Security Council. President Marcos intervened personally to squelch the idea and chastised his Defense Minister for acting without authorization. [REDACTED]

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46. Despite a recent public relations campaign by the government, the President views the insurgency problem in primarily military terms. He has said economic programs and civic action must wait until AFP clearing operations have eradicated the guerrilla presence. Moreover, he has chosen to direct the entire counterinsurgency effort personally, as he did against the fledgling NPA in the early 1970s. He has stated that he reviews all expenditures over \$3,000, calls field commanders, and approves the use of field artillery. Although we doubt that he does this more than occasionally, he does have the Regional Unified Command (RUC) Commander reporting directly to him, thereby cutting out the Defense Minister and the Chief of Staff, who complain that their broader counterinsurgency proposals cannot be implemented without the President's approval, which they cannot get. Accordingly, we believe that President Marcos is contributing to the insurgency problem and hindering its solution.

47. We believe the President's reluctance to delegate authority and his failure to implement a coordinated counterinsurgency program stem primarily from a fear that it might undermine his own power. He lacks confidence in the ability of many of those he has surrounded himself with, and feels far more secure relying on his own considerable talents than trusting his survival to men chosen more for political reliability. He may fear that the creation of a counterinsurgency czar might come back to haunt him as happened when President Quirino appointed Ramon Magsaysay to take charge of eradicating the Huks in the 1950s. Magsaysay turned his considerable power and prestige, gained from the successful Huk Campaign, against Quirino to become President himself.

48. Many hoped that the appointment of General Ramos, a West Point graduate, as Acting Chief of Staff would result in reform of the AFP, an end to military abuses, and a more vigorous prosecution of the war against the Communists. Indeed, he has made limited progress in each of these categories. We are doubtful, however, about his long-term capabilities, given the poor showing of the PC during his tenure as its commander.

49. Ramos admits that he has only been able to put a dent in the problems of corruption and human rights violations. Unless the President authorizes a thorough housecleaning of the AFP—a development we consider unlikely—Ramos's ability to initiate meaningful military reforms is seriously circumscribed. Even if the President decides not to reinstate General Ver as

Chief of Staff, assuming he is acquitted of responsibility for the assassination of Aquino, the prospects for his agreeing to the removal of incompetent but otherwise loyal officers are not good. Marcos may ask both Ver and Ramos to step down and appoint another loyalist, such as the Commander of the Army, General Ramas, to the post. In any event, the twin problems of politicization of the AFP and military abuses are unlikely to be resolved soon.

50. General Ramos's attempts to improve the AFP's military capability have proceeded slowly. Some improvement in the AFP's logistic system and its ability to supply field units has been achieved with assistance from the Joint US Military Advisory Group (JUSMAG). Budget restraints, however, handicap the efforts. Serious shortfalls in almost all key items of military supplies—particularly mobility assets and communications gear—exist, severely limiting the AFP's combat capability. Retraining, another of General Ramos's priorities, is also proving difficult because Marcos will not authorize redeployment of units from around Manila, and the money is not now available for a major force expansion.

51. Elements of the AFP and PC charged with carrying the war to the Communists still lack the initiative. Regional combat force ratios in part help explain this situation. The average regional ratio of Philippine combat forces to armed insurgents is about 4:1. (See figure 11.) Only in Metro Manila does the AFP have a decisive advantage (36:1). Elsewhere, many regional commanders find themselves confronted by an enemy force of virtually equal size. In firefights the guerrillas often seem to have more firepower and equal, if not greater, stocks of ammunition than government forces. And both sides rely almost exclusively on movement by foot for tactical mobility. In areas such as Samar and Negros, the AFP is moving back from the highlands to protect the cities and in many other areas are spending more time defending bases than on the clearing operations called for by President Marcos.

#### Near-Term Prospects

52. We believe the Communist insurgency has the potential to grow more rapidly during the next three years than at any time in the past. The Communist Party is now in an ideal position to benefit from the malaise prevalent throughout Philippine society: popular support for the Marcos government is at an all-time low; the prospects for meaningful political reforms under this regime are slight; and economic recovery will proceed only slowly. Accordingly, the

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that over the past two years the moderate opposition has gained credibility and momentum and point to its performance in the 1984 elections as evidence of growing strength. Those who hold this view believe that a government led by the moderate opposition would be committed to reform and—if it came to power in time—would have a chance to stabilize the deteriorating internal situation. They also believe most politically informed Filipinos are guardedly optimistic that a government led by the moderate opposition would be a step forward. Others believe that absent some remedy of the fundamental weaknesses cited above and the development of a cohesive program, the moderate opposition will have difficulty further expanding its credibility as an alternative to Marcos, especially in rural areas where the insurgency is strong. Those who hold this view believe the performance of the moderate opposition in the 1984 election is attributable more to anti-Marcos sentiment than as a sign of support for the opposition as a credible alternative. [ ]

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54. The military's response to the NPA is for the most part inept and often counterproductive. Given the Armed Forces' inadequate funding, poor logistics, uncertain leadership, and the politicized nature of the officer corps, it is unlikely that the military's performance will improve enough to stem increased NPA activity in the near term. If the elections planned for 1986 and 1987 are contentious, fraudulent, and violent, they will drive more people into the ranks of the Communist Party. Although circumstances may change, President Marcos intends to remain in office beyond 1987 despite the deep-rooted and irreversible public antipathy toward him. [ ]

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55. The NPA is likely to continue to grow and will gradually increase the size and frequency of military actions, and improve its military tactics to include assaults against better defended targets and expanded night operations. We believe government forces may soon be forced to cede de facto control of some lowland areas and rural highlands to the Communists in many regions of the country. [ ]

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56. Without improved leadership, training, and logistic support, the government forces cannot protect the population, economic, and strategic targets and simultaneously pursue the enemy. The Communists, however, cannot hope to achieve a military victory in the near future without substantially more arms and ammunition than they now possess. If the party does arrange for weapons purchases abroad, they must also arrange for clandestine arms deliveries to various islands in the archipelago. We believe substantial deliveries would be difficult to accomplish. [ ]

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Communists, promising real political, economic, and social reform, appear to many as the only credible alternative. [ ]

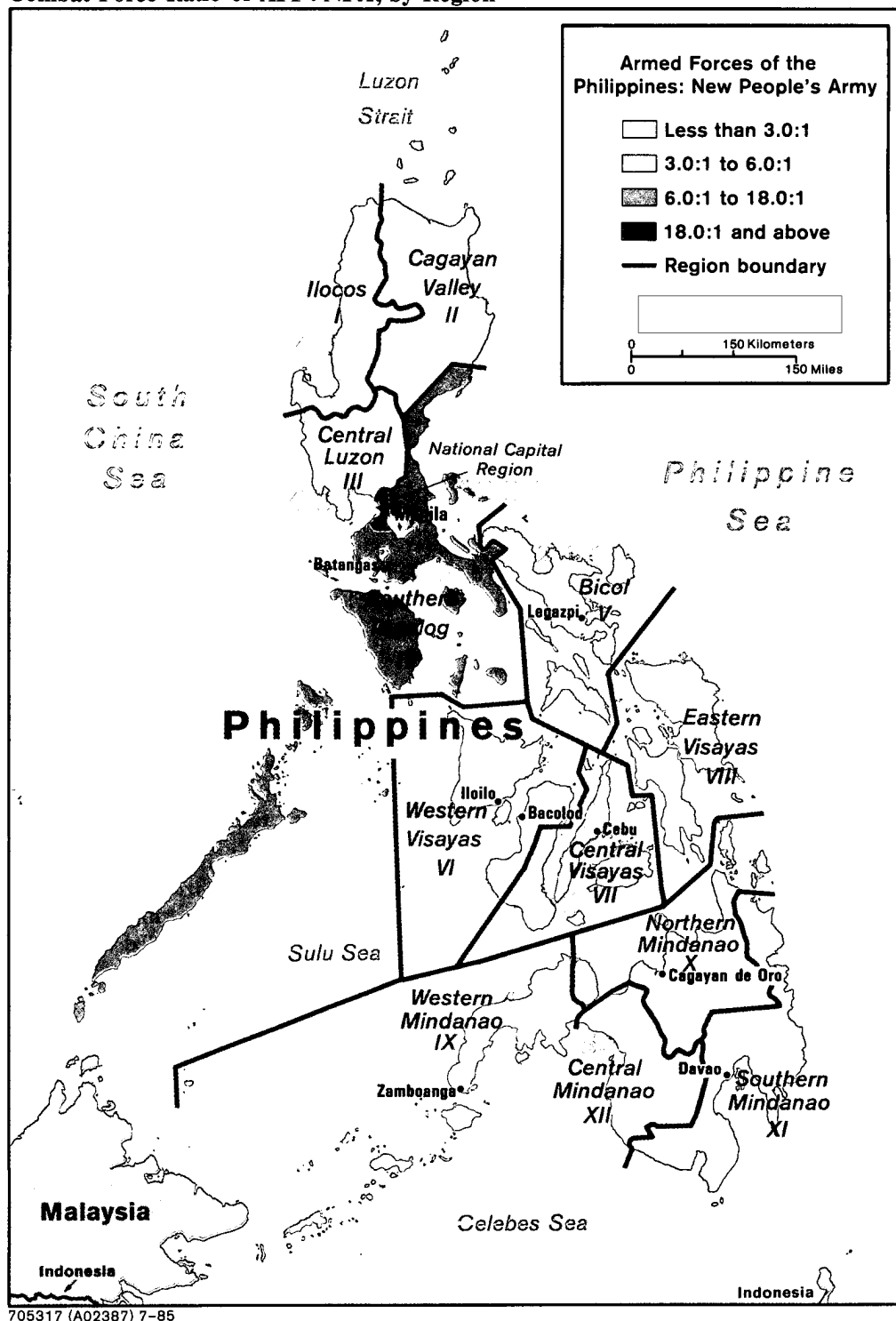
53. A third alternative to Marcos and the Communists is the moderate opposition. Unfortunately, the moderate opposition is divided and lacks extensive grassroots organization. There is, however, a difference of view on its near-term prospects. Some believe



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**Figure 11**  
**Combat Force Ratio of AFP: NPA, by Region**



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57. Party efforts to join ranks with the MNLF insurgents have not, and probably will not, succeed. The MNLF is beset with defections, financial problems, and factionalism along ethnolinguistic lines. Nur Misuari, leader of the largest and most radical group, the Tausug Muslims, has advocated cooperation with the CPP/NPA for some time, but he commands little allegiance among Muslim guerrillas outside of Sulu. Communist propaganda aimed at the Muslim community has not been able to overcome longstanding hatreds. Although Misuari may help arrange arms purchases for the NPA, we believe there will be little cooperation between the two insurgent groups in the next three years. Moreover, as the NPA increases activity in MNLF areas of operations in Mindanao and presents a threat to established MNLF extortion activities, there will be even more friction and enmity between rival insurgent groups. [REDACTED]

60. Our bleak prognosis, however, could be altered by a number of developments, chief among which would be the installation of an effective, reform-minded, non-Communist government in Manila.<sup>4</sup> This could come about as the result of an orderly constitutional succession in the event of Marcos's death, his forced removal from office by military coup, or his defeat in the 1987 presidential election. Any new non-Communist government would have an opportunity to remedy the country's many ills, and, with an improved economy and a calmer political environment, a reduction of the Communist appeal would be within reach. At the same time, any successor government would face most of the same formidable problems confronting Marcos—and without his experience or other assets. Whether a new government could make more headway against the insurgency or economic problems is an open question. [REDACTED]

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61. Other developments that could alter our bleak prognosis would:

— Require Marcos to undertake steps we believe are unlikely:

- Credible 1986 and 1987 elections.
- A coordinated national counterinsurgency strategy being adopted and vigorously pursued.
- The AFP receiving adequate funding for force expansion, counterinsurgency training, additional mobility assets, and communications gear.

— Or require tactical mistakes by the Communists:

- The CPP/NPA experiencing unresolved leadership struggles that sap the vitality of the insurgency.
- Widespread repressive control measures and heavy taxation undermining the insurgents' support in the countryside.
- Excessive urban violence in Manila arousing strong public criticism and renewed support for the government.
- Losing their nationalist credentials and claim of independence by relying heavily on outside powers for support.
- Miscalculating NPA strengths and AFP weaknesses by mounting a strategic offensive prematurely. [REDACTED]

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59. In sum, we believe that, if the present trend continues, within the next three to five years the insurgents could stalemate the military in most of the countryside and bring widespread urban terrorism to the streets of Manila. Between now and the end of the decade, we expect to see no improvement in the current negative trends:

- Continued expansion of the areas under CPP/NPA control.
- New military sophistication by the NPA, including operations by larger formations of troops.
- Expanded political infiltration by the CPP.

We also believe, however, a major governmental crisis during the next three to five years could give a coalition government dominated by the Communists or the Communists themselves an opportunity to seize power without first achieving a decisive battlefield advantage. [REDACTED]

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**Implications for US Interests**

62. The current situation could evolve into a prolonged period of "civil war," with the government increasingly hard-pressed, serious terrorist and insurgent attacks on US persons and installations, growing anti-Americanism, and a period of hard choices for the United States—including if and when to abandon Marcos. Even if the Communists ruled out direct attack on US citizens, increased violence would pose a substantial danger to the almost 100,000 Americans in the islands and US economic interests there. Under these circumstances US efforts to prop up Marcos probably would be counterproductive in that the United States would be seen by most Filipinos as supporting an unpopular dictator. As long as Marcos remains in power, we see little prospect for success against the insurgents. At best, US aid might retard Communist expansion. [REDACTED]

63. A Communist takeover in the Philippines or a government heavily influenced by the CPP would be viewed by Asian countries—particularly the other ASEAN countries and China—as a setback of historic proportions, perhaps even more devastating than the US defeat in Vietnam. Besides the loss of US bases, it could also mean a significant loss of US credibility and prestige. Among other results likely to follow a CPP/NPA takeover are:

- US forward-basing strategy would suffer due to loss of the bases, and US power-projection capability would be adversely impacted.
- The Philippines might permit Soviet access to the military facilities—at a price—thereby increasing Soviet influence in the region and diminishing the United States'. This would pose a significant strategic threat to US friends and allies in the region. [REDACTED]

**Threat to US Facilities and Personnel**

We do not consider the principal threat to US bases in the Philippines to be military. Rather, Communist Party propaganda—citing the presence of US military facilities on Philippine soil as the most visible manifestation of America's imperialist intentions and an affront to Philippine sovereignty—aims to make continued US use of the bases politically untenable in the eyes of any future government. The CPP, however, is not the only source of the anti-US-bases movement. Respected non-Communist, nationalist political leaders of the pre-martial-law period have also called for removal of the bases. To avoid charges of serving the interest of "US imperialism," any successor government may have to demand either renegotiation of the bases agreement on terms more favorable to the Philippines or the abrogation of the agreement. [REDACTED]

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A direct attack on one of the bases or ancillary facilities is possible—and threats of military or terrorist action have been received—but the NPA is much more likely to selectively target US personnel or attempt to place bombs in US installations. Direct assaults against the bases by guerrilla units would, in the near future, be counterproductive and costly. The NPA leadership is aware of their limited firepower, lack of fire support, and the difficulty of secretly massing troops for a surprise attack in Central Luzon. Party leaders also realize that such action would justify increased US military actions. Limited weapons and ammunition-stealing operations cannot be ruled out. [REDACTED]

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Assassination of Americans, on the other hand, could easily be accomplished by trained NPA sparrow units. Such attacks were planned by party leaders in 1977 and 1979 but were thwarted by US countermeasures. Some of these party leaders are still in power. NPA leaders have repeatedly said they will target US personnel if the United States provides expanded counterinsurgency assistance to Manila. [REDACTED]

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